



ANKLESARIA, TAHMURAS DINSHAH

ANKLESARIA, TAHMURAS DINSHAH (1842-1903), Parsi priest and scholar. Born at the little town of Anklesar, center of the Godavra priestly panth, he was trained first by his father, then at a school for priests' sons in Surat, becoming *nāvar* at the age of nine, and *marātab* soon after. His father dying when he was eleven, he was sent to work as priest with his maternal uncle at Disa, a military cantonment, where he persuaded an army *monšī* to teach him Persian. His remarkable intelligence and eagerness to learn induced his uncle to send him, when he was eighteen, to study further in Bombay. There he worked as priest at a Godavra fire temple and studied at the Sir Jamshetji Jejeebhoy Parsi Benevolent Institution. He was one of the first students to enroll at the Sir J. J. Zarthoshti Madressa, founded in 1863. There he studied Pahlavi (which was to become his chief scholarly concern) on traditional lines under Dastur Peshotan Sanjana, and Sanskrit. He also joined a group of young priests who studied Avestan and Pahlavi on modern scientific principles with Kharshedji R. Cama. In 1869 he was awarded a scholarship, and two years later was appointed lecturer in Sanskrit. In 1874 he became lecturer in Avestan and Pahlavi at the newly founded Mulla Firoze Madressa. In the meantime he learned French and German, and frequented the company of priests from Iran at the Dadyseth Agiary, who taught him their rituals and customs, and the "Dari" language. Having complete confidence in him, some of these priests had sent to him from Iran unique Pahlavi MSS which would almost certainly have perished otherwise in the troubles that still beset their



own community.

Tahmuras was never well off, yet he managed to build up a remarkable library of old and rare books, especially of Pahlavi MSS. The Avestan texts translated by J. Darmesteter (*Le Zend-Avesta*, vol. 3) as “Fragments Tahmuras” were from his collection. Darmesteter, who regarded him as the scholar possessing “the most certain and extensive knowledge of Pahlavi literature,” consulted him frequently in preparing his translation of the Avesta, whose copious notes owe much to Tahmuras. Among other eminent Western scholars who drew upon his knowledge were E. W. West and K. F. Geldner.

In 1876 Tahmuras bought the Fort Printing Press in Bombay and published many books on Zoroastrian subjects as part of his wider service to his community. He was concerned to maintain familiarity with the Avestan script among his fellow priests (who were turning more and more to the use of Gujarati), and printed the *Yasna*, *Vendidad*, and *Korda Avesta* in beautifully cut Avestan type. He also published, or prepared for publication, an important series of Pahlavi texts. His own editions of Pahlavi works, which brought him international recognition, were published posthumously, mainly by his son Bahramgore. They include the *Bundahišn* (1909), a facsimile edition from one of his own MSS; the *Dātistān-i dīnīk*, Part I, *Pursišn* 1-40 (1911); *The social code of the Parsees in Sasanian times or Mādigān-i Hazār Dādistān*, Part II (1912); *Dānāk-u Mainyô-i Khard*, Pahl., Pazand and Sanskrit texts (1913). He also published Gujarati translations of the *Ardvīsūr Yašt* (1874), and of Part I of the *Dātistān-i dīnīk*, in collaboration with S. D. Bharucha (1926), as well as various learned articles in English.

Tahmuras had a happy marriage (contracted in traditional fashion when he was four), which brought him eight sons and three daughters. He died in 1903.

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